



ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

**REPORTS FROM INFORMATION SERVICES 1**

**THE MUSEUM VISITOR: I - SURVEY DESIGN - 1959**



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THE MUSEUM VISITOR: 1 – *Survey Design*

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July 1959

ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

*Toronto · Canada*

## NOTE

It was originally suggested that the first report in this series should be prefaced by a statement of the philosophy of museum public relations at the ROM. The nature of this and subsequent reports will show that we are still attempting to establish points of reference in this relatively new and uncharted field.

D.S.A.

D.F.C.

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## INTRODUCTION

Scientific investigations of the museum visitor have been primarily concerned with his behaviour within the museum (3, 4, 7). For some time answers to the questions—who he is, where he came from and his reasons for being a visitor—have been recognized as essential to the intelligent formation of museum policies. All too frequently this has been a matter of firm and biased opinion for museum personnel.

In 1958 the Office of Information Services at the Royal Ontario Museum began a long-term research program designed to answer some of these questions. Public relations planning had been hampered since its beginning in 1956 by a complete lack of information about the Museum's audience. Impressive increases in attendance appeared to be the result, in part, of the first two years of promotion. The following questions, however, remained among those unanswered: Were the same visitors coming more frequently? Were new visitors coming once and not returning? Which visitors responded to which facet of promotion? Were visitors being drawn from specific socio-economic levels? Was the increase in attendance more directly related to changes in the characteristics and distribution of the population than to the Museum's promotion?

Not only was it impossible to examine the effectiveness of the public relations program, but long-term negative effects and the existence of unrecognized but crucial public relations problems also remained disturbing possibilities.

The need for a program of research was recognized shortly after the Museum's Office of Information Services was created in July, 1956, but there were three obstacles at that time. First, the Information Services staff had no previous museum experience and was therefore ill-qualified to direct research. Second, the costs of social surveying were far beyond the budget of the new office, and third, the unfamiliarity of

the academic staff with the new "publicity" office, and misconceptions about its functions, would have made it difficult to get the much needed co-operation of all departments.

During the first year of operation, 1956-57, no attempt was made to do more than a "common sense" program of promotion and publicity. Provisional policy was set for the second year on the basis of this experience, and during this period, preparations for the research program began. Canadian Facts Limited, a marketing and audience research organization, carried out Schwerin System (8) surveys of the Metropolitan Toronto population. These provided us with data on the frequency of Museum visiting, correlated with age, sex, income and education, which was most helpful in planning the present survey.

The only data of value on hand in the Museum were gross attendance figures. A detailed examination of these for the period 1949-58, showed seasonal fluctuations and systematic daily variations within the week which were remarkably similar to earlier findings of a U.S. mid-western museum (5). While both these studies indicated the operation of systematic factors, no specific ones could be isolated.

A number of visitor surveys carried out in other institutions (1, 2, 3, 6) were examined, and the Museum's needs were discussed at length with Museum administrators and with experienced social surveyors.

In the spring of 1958, a five-year research program was begun. The objective was to determine who the Museum's visitors were, why they came, and why others did not.

The beginning of the program was made practical by the advent of the Women Members Committee at the Museum. More than thirty members of this committee volunteered to take instruction as interviewers and to carry the load of the most time-consuming and tedious aspect of the work. The first survey—to define the museum's visiting population—began on July 1, 1958.



## THE DESIGN OF THE SURVEY

A sample of 4,800 museum visitors was designed which would yield information concerning the visitors' age, sex, socio-economic level, interests, education, etc., and most important, his area of residence. Knowledge of the latter, it was felt, would permit a comparison with census data which would lead to adequate future sampling of areas which seemed to be relatively unrepresented in a visitor sample. The problems of motivation, and of attitudes towards the museum are being approached therefore, from two perspectives. In the one, additional samples of museum visitors will be drawn and interviewed: in the other, the community will be studied—not blindly, but with a survey designed to examine most intensely the “unrepresented” areas, with particular attention to their attitudes and conceptions of the museum and its functions.

In designing the survey of visitors, it was necessary to take into account several factors which might affect not only the number of persons visiting during a given period, but also the characteristics of these visitors. Thus time of day, day of the week, and seasonal factors had to be controlled within the design.<sup>1</sup>

### TIME OF DAY

Since no adequate information was available regarding the number of visitors during different hours of the day, it was felt that the sample should contain equal numbers from morning, mid-day, and afternoon hours in the case of week-days and Saturdays (visiting hours 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on each of these days). Accordingly, on the days selected for study, one-third of the interviewing was begun at 10 a.m.; one-third at 12.30 p.m.; and the remainder at 3 p.m. On Sundays, when visiting

<sup>1</sup>The assistance of Mr. C. Green, Statistical Reporting and Tabulating Ltd., Toronto, is gratefully acknowledged.

hours are limited to the three-hour period from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. half of the interviewing was begun at 2 p.m., the other half at 3.30 p.m.

DAYS OF THE WEEK

Inspection of the gross attendance figures indicated that the attendance on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, was in the approximate ratio of 1:1:1:1:4:16.<sup>1</sup> That is, attendance on each of the four week-days was approximately equal, with a four-fold increase above this figure on Saturdays, and with the number of Sunday visitors exceeding the week-days figure by a 16 to 1 ratio, and Saturday by a 4 to 1 ratio.

It was decided, therefore, to draw a "disproportionate" sample and to weight the findings from this sample so as to represent adequately the visiting population on the different days of the week. The actual numbers to be sampled on each day and the weighting factors are shown below in Table 1.

TABLE 1

*Number of Interviews on each Day and Weighting Factors*

DAY	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS	WEIGHTING FACTOR	REPRESENTATION IN FINAL ESTIMATES
Tuesday	25	1	25 ( 1)
Wednesday	25	1	25 ( 1)
Thursday	25	1	25 ( 1)
Friday	25	1	25 ( 1)
Saturday	50	2	100 ( 4)
Sunday	50	8	400 (16)
	<hr/> 200		<hr/> 600

SEASONAL VARIATIONS

Seasonal variation in gross attendance figures are indicated below in Figure 1.

Figure 1 also shows by means of the broken verticle lines four 3-month quarters corresponding to winter, spring, summer, and fall categories. The total survey was divided therefore, into four quarters,

<sup>1</sup>Museum closed to visitors on Mondays.

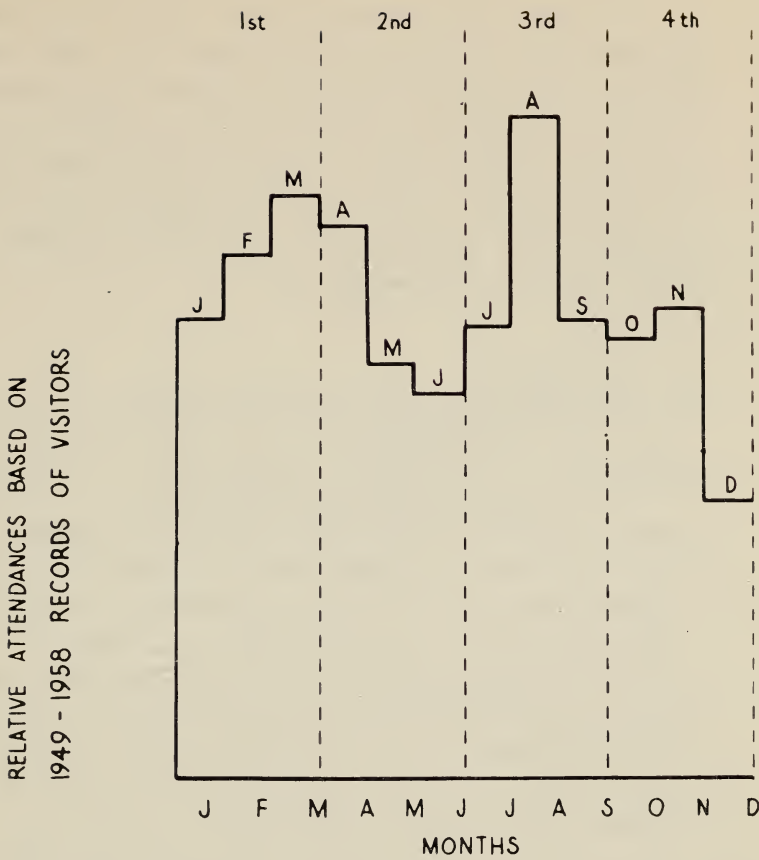


Figure 1. Relation of attendance to months of the year

each of which would yield information on the attendance for a particular "season."

Within each of these quarters, each day was sampled six times. Thus from the thirteen Tuesdays occurring in each 13-week quarter, six of the Tuesdays were chosen at random to be used as interviewing days. A similar random selection of interviewing days was made for each of the other days of the week on which the Museum was open to the public. Further, on each of the days selected for interviewing, the starting time was chosen at random with the restriction that each starting time was represented an equal number of times. Therefore of the six Wednesdays, for example, two 10 a.m. starting times were assigned randomly; two 12.30 p.m. starting times were assigned randomly; and the remaining two Wednesdays were assigned the 3 p.m. starting time.

The sample was thus constructed to "control" the effects of seasonal variations by repeating the same design four times, once for each thirteen-week quarter. Within each quarter approximately one-half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) of all days was included in the survey; the numbers to be interviewed were selected so as to give a fair and valid representation of the total number of visitors; and the possible effects of sampling at particular hours of the day were controlled by sampling equally from different periods with any given day.

#### INTERVIEWING

As noted above, the interviewers were members of a women's committee who volunteered their time and effort over the year-long period of the survey. A mimeographed questionnaire was supplied (see appendix) on which the interviewer could record the exact replies of the visitor, or in many cases simply check off a reply from a list provided on the questionnaire itself. With thirty volunteers it was possible to arrange a schedule months in advance in which no interviewer contributed an undue amount of time, and in which it was hoped each interviewer collected data during each day and each time period as described above. While rigid control of the latter was not made an integral part of the design of the survey it is felt that no systematic "errors" or "biases" were introduced into the data through over-use of one or more interviewers.

Interviewing was completed on June 27, 1959. The data are currently being analyzed and will be published as "The Museum Visitor: II—Results of a Survey" in the fall of 1959.

R. O. M.  
VISITOR SURVEY

Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
Questionnaire \_\_\_\_\_  
Period 1 2 3 4 \_\_\_\_\_

INTERVIEWER'S NOTE: Approach group and address them generally;  
then interview the person who appears to act  
as spokesman.

"Good morning I am Mrs  
afternoon Miss ..... of the Museum  
staff; and we're doing a survey of our visitors ...."

1	How many are there in your group?	1 2 3 4 5 +5
	Male (adult)	1 2 3 4 5 +5
	Female ( " )	1 2 3 4 5 +5
	Others below 21 years	1 2 3 4 5 +5
2	At what school-level are the others in your group?	
	Pre-school	1 2 3 4 5 +5
	Elementary	1 2 3 4 5 +5
	Secondary	1 2 3 4 5 +5
	University	1 2 3 4 5 +5
	Other working etc.	1 2 3 4 5 +5
3	(a) Have you ever visited this museum before? 1 Yes ( ) 2 No ( ) X Not sure ( )	
	If "Yes"	3(b) When was the last time? Month _____ Yr _____
		3(c) How many times have you visited this museum in the last 12 months? _____
4	(a) How did you get here to-day? 1 Walked ( ) 2 Street-car ( ) 3 Bicycle ( ) 4 Automobile ( ) 5 Driven; i. e. given lift taxi hitch-hiking ( )	
	If "Auto"	4(b) Did you have any difficulty finding parking? 1 Yes ( ) 2 No ( )
		4(c) How far away (how many blocks) did you park? Number of blocks _____ Used Museum lot ( ) 0

5	(a) What is your home address? Number and street _____ City _____ Prov., State _____ Country _____		
	If from Toronto area	5(b) Why did you come to the museum today? _____ _____ If reply "To see X (special) exhibit" 5(c) How did you find out about this showing? 0 T.V. ( )      6 Word of mouth ( ) 1 Radio ( )      7 "Orbit" ( ) 2 Press ( )      8 School visit follow-up ( ) 3 Notice Board ( )      Y No answer or 4 Direct Mail ( )      No specific answer ( ) 9 Other _____	
	If from outside Toronto area	5(d) What is the reason for your trip to Toronto? 1 Business ( )    2 Holiday ( ) 3 Visiting CNE ( ) Other _____	
	(e) In which part of the Museum are you most interested? _____ _____		
6	(a) If now living in the Toronto area : Ask How long have you lived in the Toronto area? _____		
	(b) Where were you born?      1 Canada ( ) Other _____		
	If "Other" 6(c)	How many years have you lived in Canada? 0 ( ) up to 1 yr. 1 ( ) 2 - 5 yrs. 2 ( ) 6 - 10 yrs. 3 ( ) +10 yrs.	
7	(a) Do you live in a suite, apartment, private room 1 ( ) OR do you live in a house 2 ( ) ?		
	If "house". 7(b)	Do you own or rent the house? 1 own ( )      2 rent ( ) other _____	





12	<p>SHOW CARD ASK Would you please tell me to which of these age groups you belong 1 2 3 4 5 ? (circle one)</p> <hr/> <p>..... and which of these income brackets please? 1 2 3 4 5 ? (circle one)</p> <p>"Thank you very much"</p>													
	<p>BE SURE TO RECCRD THE FOLLOWING:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="207 665 535 834"></td> <td data-bbox="535 665 906 834"> <p>SEX of respondent MALE ( ) 1 FEMALE ( ) 2</p> </td> <td data-bbox="906 665 974 834"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="207 834 535 1059"></td> <td data-bbox="535 834 906 1059"> <p>DAY Sunday ( ) 1 Tuesday ( ) 2 Wednesday ( ) 3 Thursday ( ) 4 Friday ( ) 5 Saturday ( ) 6</p> </td> <td data-bbox="906 834 974 1059"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="207 1059 535 1210"></td> <td data-bbox="535 1059 906 1210"> <p>TIME 10.00 ( ) 1 12.30 ( ) 2 2.00 ( ) 3 3.00 ( ) 4</p> </td> <td data-bbox="906 1059 974 1210"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="207 1210 535 1316"></td> <td data-bbox="535 1210 906 1316"> <p>Number of persons refusing to answer questionnaire between this and the last completed form: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</p> </td> <td data-bbox="906 1210 974 1316"></td> </tr> </table>		<p>SEX of respondent MALE ( ) 1 FEMALE ( ) 2</p>			<p>DAY Sunday ( ) 1 Tuesday ( ) 2 Wednesday ( ) 3 Thursday ( ) 4 Friday ( ) 5 Saturday ( ) 6</p>			<p>TIME 10.00 ( ) 1 12.30 ( ) 2 2.00 ( ) 3 3.00 ( ) 4</p>			<p>Number of persons refusing to answer questionnaire between this and the last completed form: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</p>		
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Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ sign please

Coding \_\_\_\_\_ Checking \_\_\_\_\_



To which of these age groups do you belong?

Group 1: 14 years or under

Group 2: 15 to 24 years

Group 3: 25 to 34 years

Group 4: 35 to 49 years

Group 5: 50 years or over

In which of these income brackets are you?

Group 1: Up to \$2,999 per year

Group 2: \$3,000 to \$3,999 per year

Group 3: \$4,000 to \$4,999 per year

Group 4: \$5,000 to \$6,999 per year

Group 5: \$7,000 and above.

Cards shown to interviewees for response to question 12.

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